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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 03800-86  
14 August 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Hal Ford  
Acting Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: Comments on the Military Advisory Panel's (MAP's) Report of  
24 July 1986

As requested, I offer the following thoughts on [ ] Report. By happy coincidence, the chief issue he raises dovetails neatly with certain recommendations of my own concerning the National Estimates business which I would like to give you (para 1, below) as I depart the NIC.

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1. How useful are NIEs to senior policymakers?

- My own view -- based on experience in the NIC, O/NE, DDI, DDO, and SSCI -- has long been very similar to the prime issue which [ ] and his colleagues raise: that NIEs do not enjoy the impact on senior policymakers that these products deserve, and that more must be done to capture the latter's attentions.
- With some exceptions, e.g., NIE 11-3/8 and certain other unique military and technical Estimates, our NIEs usually face stiff competition indeed from many sources, among them: senior consumers' lack of available time, the flood in upon them of other information; the fact that policymakers carry their own NIEs around in their heads; dispassionate Estimates are by nature less beguiling than advocacy papers; and -- especially -- occasional cases where NIEs' messages are not congenial to committed policymakers (Lebanon and Vietnam, for example). Numerous polls of consumers over the years fully confirm the MAP's testimony on these scores; in the main, Estimates simply do not have as much entree as do the latest specific intelligence items.
- What do? The alternative hypotheses suggestion which the MAP suggests might be useful, but far more must be done; the surgery necessary to heighten the impact of Estimates has to be major. We

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in the NIC will be happy to discuss these questions with you and the MAP, and to get your reactions to the following (HPF) surgical prescriptions that:

- o DCI, DDCI, and NIC officers place much more emphasis than we now do on personally marketing Estimates: that is, buttonholing specific senior policymakers; personal notes calling their attentions to the particular piece, etc. This will be aided by maximum exposure of NIOs to top policymakers, resulting not only from their own initiative, but from their maximum participation as DCI representatives in senior policy forums. Also, enlist the support of well-placed consultants (such as the MAP members) to help merchandise Estimates with top policymakers.
- o DCI, DDCI, and NIC officers place much more emphasis on personally briefing the President and other top officers on the Key Judgments of especially significant Estimates, whether authoritative big studies or fast tracks which speak to some crisis or fast-moving policy situation. This is only done once in a long while now; there is room for much more.
- o On certain subjects of key importance, the NIC prepare short, sharp overall estimates, three or four manuscript pp., total. And, personally brief certain of these (including any alternative views).
- o NIOs be more aggressive in not only reflecting back to DCI what the decisionmakers downtown are interested in, but in pushing these policymakers to bring the NIC in specifically on ongoing policy situations: i.e., more exercises along the line of the recent [redacted] We should be brought in with as much advance notice as possible--for various reasons, including maximum opportunity to discern any special policy pleading and to guarantee professional, dispassionate estimative results.
- o DCI, DDCI, and NIC officers push policymakers to request the NIC to prepare more SNIEs on what would be the likely consequences if the US (theoretically) pursued this or that course re this or that problem situation in the world. Many such exercises have been done over the years, to mutual benefit, though very few in recent years. Bring us in early (as per preceding tick).
- o NIOs spend much less time in coordinating big, time-consuming NIEs. Turn a lot of such tasks over to certain special senior NIC officers or A/NIOs, and use more of the NIOs' time in crafting creative, provocative brief policy-relevant

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thinkpieces for the DCI and senior policymakers. The NIOs are uniquely situated bureaucratically and uniquely fitted intellectually to function as think tankers; few people elsewhere in town have such opportunity, talent, or professional approach -- certainly in the sense of not trying to sell some particular policy, priority, or budget emphasis.

- o A new (small) office be created in the NSC structure to tie intelligence and policymaking together much more closely and systematically. This has long been, and remains, a prime need -- the need to create a function/service which starts in where intelligence assessments leave off: drawing policy significance, consequences of various actions, the presentation of options, etc. There are no systematic such intelligence-policy ties at present, and actual professional (and dispassionate) intelligence appraisals are often absent while the policy process proceeds by its own steam, its judgments based on all kinds of ad hoc appraisals, intelligence community and otherwise. N.B.: This should not be tied in any way to the present OEOB Crisis Management Center, but must be a professional, credible operation.
  - oo What is specifically needed is the seconding of a top rate senior intelligence officer or two, picked by the DCI, to a small office of the NSC headed by a top rate officer chosen by the President for his/her professional ability/integrity, not a functionary or a political assignee. This could perhaps be centered in the DCI's OEOB office.
  - oo Until and unless some such professional, systematic function is created, NIEs and other top assessments will continue simply to make their way downtown; compete with droves of other incoming data; be used or not in haphazard function; and, not least, from time to time be criticized because they are "not sufficiently policy relevant."
- o The NIC develop additional means, on and beyond narrative paragraphs and graphics, of communicating estimative findings. In addition to giving more top-level briefings, as discussed above, possible video communication should be examined. (At the NIC's request, CPAS is now putting together an experimental such tape, this particular one communicating Key Judgments of a Philippine SNIE.) Not too distant in the future will be opportunities for senior CIA and NIC officers to brief top policymakers through means of inter-office video hook-ups. Plans for the latter (hardware, process, and content) should go forward actively now: this will be a

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winner, whether or not the experiment with video KJ presentations, per se, pans out or not.

2. Do the Estimates reflect a useful DDO input? In our judgment there is less of a problem here than the MAP poses. NIC-DDO relations are remarkably cooperative

Our analytic/estimative needs have not been harmed by any DDO hesitance to ante up.

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3. Does the NIC suffer because it has to draw on the time and talents of people who do not belong to the NIC? In most cases this is not a major hazard; the system works pretty well in practice.

4. Should not the estimative process profit from more retrospective analysis? Agree. I made this recommendation to the MAP. We have done this a bit, for instance in the annual NIE 7 series on global instabilities; the NIC can and should do more of this on selected -- but not all -- Estimates.

5. Is there not need for more "blue" knowledge in the preparation and presentation of Estimates? Agree. Again, I made this recommendation to the MAP. Here DCI muscle will be most helpful.

6. Should there not be more in the way of net assessments? Yes. A perennial problem, allied with #5, above. We will discuss at some length with the MAP at our next outing.

7. Cannot the NIC Production Plan pull more individual Estimates together under broader themes? Yes. DCI/DDCI have got us in that direction now. (See the NIC's 12 August 1986 memo of certain such suggestions to the DCI/DDCI.)

8. Should not the MAP focus as much as possible on Estimates in their earlier formative stages? Yes, this has been agreed MAP-NIC canon from the outset.

(9. As I have earlier stated, the MAP-NIC relationship is good and valued one. So far, so good, with prospect of all parties profiting.)

*Hal Ford*

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